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"No, problem, Mr. Woodfin. It'll only take a minute of your time. I just need some information and I'll

have you on your way."

It's just that easy. In an effort to make it more convenient for people to buy hunting and fishing licenses, particularly for our out-of-state visitors, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) has taken the first step in the process to eventually have an automated license sales system. This process will not only make purchasing a license easier for our customers, but will also improve our internal operations and provide us with more opportunities to better serve you.

Under an agreement beginning August 1, 2001, with Bass Pro Shops, the nation's number one outdoor retailer will begin to sell hunting and fishing licenses over

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What does this mean for you? Convenience. No matter where you are in the U. S., with a simple FREE telephone call to 1-800-986-2628, you can purchase a variety of Virginia hunting and fishing licenses and *immediately* go participate in these activities.

How does this work? After you provide your information to a Bass Pro Shops representative, you will be issued a temporary number. Write the number down and sign that slip of paper. That's your temporary license, which you can put in your pocket and instantly be on

your way. Within 48 hours, your permanent license will be mailed to you.

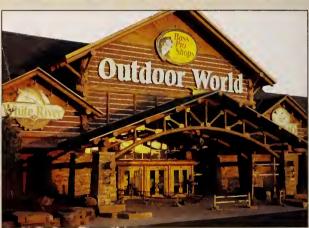
Along with the cost of the license, a small processing fee of \$3.95 will be charged to your credit card. For out-of-state visitors, or for those with busy schedules, this fee is a small price to pay for the time saved and ease of delivery.

With another hunting season beginning and the fall fishing in full swing, Virginia's outdoor opportunities abound. And, what better way to celebrate, than to participate in this year's 30th Annual National Hunting and Fishing Day? On September 22, 2001, National Hunting and Fishing Day activities across Virginia will provide opportunities for out-

door-oriented people, and for those who are interested in learning more, to develop a better appreciation of our natural resources through participating in outdoor experiences.

For more that 84 years, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has worked to protect the Commonwealth's wildlife resources and to offer its citizens outdoor recreational opportunities. As we have evolved, so have our programs and services. Toll free numbers, e-mail, and Web sites seem so far from the tranquil setting of the





For your instant hunting or fishing license, call Bass Pro Shops at 1-800-986-2628.

outdoors, and yet they are bringing us closer. As we all speed along the "information highway," it's nice to know that we can use the knowledge that we have gathered to find a destination that is less traveled, to wet a line, hike a trail, or watch a deer.

National Hunting and Fishing Day September 22,2001 www.nhfday.org

Commonwealth of Virginia James S. Gilmore III, Governor

HUNTING & FISHING

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The Eastern gray squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis) is one of the most common mammals seen in Virginia. From the woodlands to our backyards squirrels have adapted well to a variety of habitats. It is not uncommon for squirrels to produce two litters each year, which can consist of 2-3 young each. Page 9.



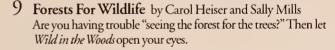
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Cover: Eastern gray squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis) @Maslowski Photo

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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

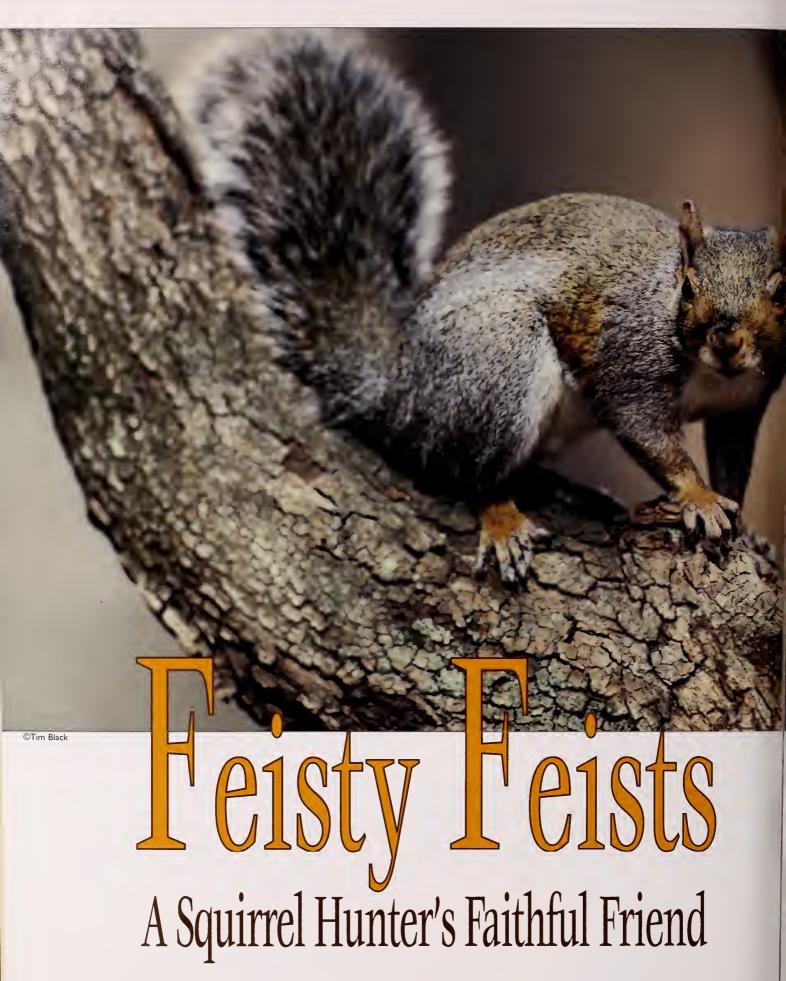








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If you have never tried hunting squirrels with a dog then you may have been barking up the wrong tree.



These four legged, canine squirrel hunters, often referred to as treeing feists, are descendants of rat terriers from the Tennessee Cumberland Mountains.

by Ken Perrotte

idget, 10 pounds of energy wrapped in dog hair, races from tree to tree in an Orange County, Va., stand of tall hardwoods. She circles the big oaks, giving them the once over with her nose, and then backs off 15 to 20 yards to scan the nooks and crannies of the canopy.

Most dogs hunt by smell, but Midget likes visual confirmation. Consider it wisdom beyond her years. The squirrels she's seeking have a tendency to leave an abundance of scent all over the forest floor and this little dog likes to make sure she's barking up the right tree.

County game warden, praises his hunting companion Midget, "Queen of the squirrel woods," after a successful day of hunting.



Orange County Game Warden John Berry, Midget's hunting partner, and his longtime friend Pete Brown, a Brandy Station gunsmith, follow leisurely behind their dogs.

Pete totes a Winchester Model 94 lever action .22, his favorite squirrelhunting piece. He carefully engraved it with the image of a squirrel in a tree. John carries a lightweight Anschutz .22, crowned with a Leupold variable power scope. Clearly, these guys are serious squirrel hunters.

"It's tough hunting this late in January," Berry noted. Those squirrels come down early, grab an acorn or two and a drink, and then head back up the tree. Midget trees by sight as much as scent."

Any whitetail hunter, who becomes a squirrel hunter after deer season, knows the frustration. When sitting on a deer stand, a limit of squirrels usually overruns your position within 90 minutes. At deer season's end, though, good luck on collecting two or three bushytails after a full morning in the woods.

This is where Midget and her canine partners improve the odds. The dogs detect trees that are likely holding squirrels—trees a solo hunter likely would walk past.

The diminutive dogs, known as treeing feists, are descendants of rat terriers from Tennessee's Cumberland Mountains. They specialize in squirrel hunting, although they'll usually tree anything from opossums to raccoons to bobcats, Berry explained.

'They don't mess with deer or rabbits, but they will flush an occasional turkey," he said.

The feists cover a lot of ground. Fallen timber that also serves as favored runways for squirrels appears

Opposite page: A well-trained dog can make the difference in locating hard to find squirrels that would otherwise sit motionless and unseen to a hunter. Right: The shrill sound of a yapping feist is enough to bring the most secretive of squirrels from their treetop lair.

irresistible and the dogs negotiate these forest balance beams with the ease of Olympic gymnasts. Other times, they simply jump on a stump and listen.

Working a small hillside of selectcut timber, Midget, Lady, and Katie, a nine-year-old female that "trees like the devil," are sounding off at a massive oak.

Berry and Brown approach slowly. Midget runs over and gazes up, seemingly trying to direct Berry's eyes to the right spot. Berry spots the squirrel, hugging a branch near the top.

"Pete, you take this one," he offers. Brown, though, can't detect the tiny patch of gray. He tells Berry to

take the shot.

Nudging his hat back, Berry leans into a tree for a solid rest. Seconds after the crack of the small rifle, the squirrel drops to the forest floor.

The dogs race to retrieve it and Lady earns the honor, proudly bringing the big gray to Berry.

"That little Lady—she's the best of the bunch. She has just been a natural since she was a young puppy," Berry said with a broad smile and obvious pride. "This is all part of the game. Let the dogs work and then make a good clean shot."

Without the feists, the squirrel atop the oak would likely have remained motionless and unseen to the hunters. The dogs yapping below will often make the squirrel break cover, either out of curiosity or concern.

"We don't take any squirrel that the dogs haven't treed. This is a dog sport, a shooting sport. I can't help it. I just love playing with these puppies. They have such enthusiasm," smiled Berry, a feist fan since 1990.

One attribute Berry likes about his feists is that they also make excellent house pets. "They are great first hunting dogs for youngsters," he declared.

Puppies, he explained, usually cost about \$150, but a "started" dog can go for \$800 to \$1,000. A fully broken, trained dog fetches up to





\$2,000. The key is to get a dog that comes from a long line of treeing dogs.

A young dog usually trains best when working alongside an older, more experienced dog, but Berry says owners can energize a feist's instincts to tree squirrels just by letting them see squirrels.

"Just take them out fairly often, even if it's just for a 20-minute walk in an area where they'll see squirrels. By the time they're age two, they should do pretty well," he said.

Later in the morning, the dogs get a chance to really exhibit their skills when they locate the mother of all squirrel trees. The giant oak, nestled against a pasture, had broad limbs reaching out in all directions.

As Pete and John approach, it becomes apparent six to eight squirrels are in the single oak. The squirrels begin scattering with some jumping to adjacent trees, trying to scamper to the ground for a getaway. The dogs react, repeatedly heading the squirrels off and forcing their retreat back up the tree.

The hunters wait patiently for the

squirrels to hunker on limbs and offer clean shots.

After collecting a few, Berry says, "Let's leave the rest for seed."

He and Brown pull out their knives and some plastic bags and begin quickly dressing the game. An expert, it takes Berry barely 90 seconds per animal. Both hunters are crack shots and there isn't an ounce of meat wasted.

"This will be some fine table fare," Berry announces. "Pete has a delicious recipe for squirrel gravy and biscuits."

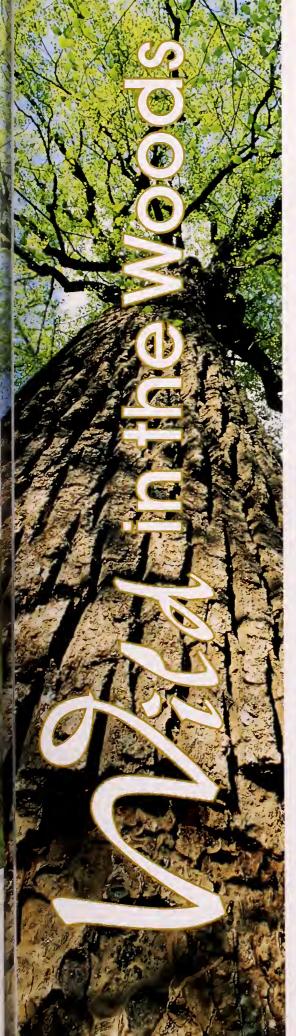
Late in the morning, the hunt over, Berry and Brown amble along a trail leading back to their trucks. Berry's rifle rests on one shoulder. Midget sits upright on the forearm of his other arm. She's a queen of the squirrel woods and rides in appropriate regal fashion.

Berry softly asks his hunting partner, "We had a good morning, didn't we Midgie?"

Ken Perrotte is a writer and outdoor columnist for the Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star, who lives in King George, Virginia.



A lightweight, .22 caliber rifle, which is easy to carry through the woods, is all a hunter needs to bring down a squirrel. As any serious squirrel hunter will tell you, fried, baked, or put into a pot of Brunswick stew, bringing home a limit of squirrels makes for some fine eat'n.



Forests for Wildlife

by Carol Heiser and Sally Mills illustrations by Spike Knuth



hile few would argue over the aesthetic and spiritual qualities that draw us to forests, we often don't stop to consider the tremendous practical contributions they make to life on the planet. Fifteen million acres of forestland help moderate Virginia's climate, cleanse the air and water, and house and feed wildlife. A diverse mix of hardwoods and pines thrive here, removing carbon dioxide from the air and providing oxygen. The extensive root systems of these trees hold soil in place, while multiple layers of vegetation filter rain and runoff. These trees also provide thousands of wood products and forestry-related jobs.

Benefits for Wildlife

A forest provides babitat for all kinds of animals, from tiny salamanders and songbirds to loping black bears. Because a forest has a distinct vertical structure, with different levels or layers of vegetation from the leaf litter up to the highest tree limb, the animal communities associated with these layers each have a special niche or role, often defined by their feeding strategies. The wood thrush, for example, feeds on insects on the forest floor, while the pileated woodpecker also an insect feeder-usually works many feet above ground.

Natural and man-made events

cause a forest to constantly

birds or hibernating mammals to den inside. Cavities made by woodpeckers provide crucial homes to other birds and small mammals years after the original builders have moved on.

Life in the Litter

The fallen limbs, meanwhile, decompose slowly through the aide of insects, bacteria, and fungi eating away at the wood, and the decaying organic matter creates a unique habitat for ground species. Some organisms, such as wasps and slugs, lay their eggs in decomposing wood, and others, like beetles tunnel

mant over winter.

into the wood and become dor-

When you roll a rotting log over and dig into the soft, fluffy matter beneath it, you'll find a host of creatures that depend on the decaying material as the center of their food web. Termites, woodeating beetles, and carpenter ants chew on the wood and begin the process. Fungi rootlets, called mycorrhizae, work their way into the wood and absorb nutrients, while the acid released by lichens helps break it down further. Sow bugs, millipedes, and wood roaches are decomposers that feed on this dead plant material and convert it into the rich bumus that ultimately forms soil. Centipedes and spiders prey upon the decomposers, and all of these insects and spiders, in turn, become food for snakes, birds, and small mammals.



undergo gradual changes in **Forests** plant types, a process called succession. Hardwoods grow slowly but eventually When a fire opens up an existing forest overtake pines, interceptor a forest is clearcut, an entirely new mix ing sunlight and eventually of trees and opportunistic plants take root, causing weaker trees to nourishing small animals that become food for die and fall. Where a larger mammals, reptiles, or raptors (birds of trunk breaks or a tree dies in place, a snag remains, offering a place for cavity-nesting





A Forest Mascot

Virginia forests are blessed with many species of squirrels, including two that fly and one found solely in high elevations—the red squirrel. But what you are most likely to encounter are the Eastern gray squirrel and the Eastern fox squirrel—common tree squirrel species that are also popular small game mammals hunted in the fall.

The two are quite similar in appearance, but they differ in some of their habits. The gray squirrel, a rather gregarious species, is highly *arboreal*, which means it is quite at home in the tree canopy, sometimes appearing to defy gravity in leaping from limb to limb. The larger fox squirrel is fairly solitary and moves gracefully across the forest floor, preferring to feed more on the ground. Fox squirrels are rare east of the Blue Ridge in Virginia. Two *subspecies* or varieties of fox squirrels once abundant in the Tidewater region are now endangered or possibly extinct.

Gray squirrels weigh 12–23 ounces, and fox squirrels 21–53 ounces. Both species bear young in late winter and again in late summer. Squirrels feed primarily on the nuts and fruits of oaks, hickories, walnut, black gum, and beech. This diet is supplemented by buds and seeds from other trees as well as fungi. Squirrels will even strip the bark off young trees in lean years.

Both squirrel types stay generally within a fixed range of their nest tree where they have built an abode of twigs and leaves, or a den up in a tree cavity, but they will shift their home range if food is limited. As trees reclaim old farms and cities spread outward, squirrels now find themselves in new, urban settings. During times of plenty, squirrels store nuts in underground caches. It is a survival strategy that inadvertently leads to the planting of new trees, as these rodents rarely return to all of the nuts they have buried.



The Eastern gray squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis) obtains its primary source of fat for the winter from the acorns of oak trees.

Folklore

According to biologist Dr. Donald Linzey, the gray squirrel's habit of descending a tree headfirst (which it does at alarming speed) earned it the name *adjidaumo*, meaning "head foremost," among northern Indian tribes. Squirrels are aided in such antics by a long, bushy tail that provides balance and, at other times, sunshade or warmth.

Did You Know?

Longleaf pine, a major southern tree species, is now virtually nonexistent in southeastern Virginia (its most northerly range), with only scattered, individual trees left. Because of its high resin content, this is a species that was used extensively during the colonial era up to the mid-1800s to supply pitch, tar, and turpentine for "naval stores." Subsequent land management that excluded fire effectively eliminated any remaining longleaf habitat, because the species—which is itself resistant to fire-requires periodic burning to reduce competition between its seedlings and other woody-stemmed plants. The last naturally reproducing longleaf

pine stand in the state oc-

in Isle of Wight County.

curs on the Blackwater

Ecologic Preserve, also

known as the Zuni Pine Barrens.

The Virginia Department of Forestry is working to re-establish longleaf pine. To date, forest managers have planted about 50,000 genetically improved trees in eastern Virginia, on sites that hold promise for their long-term growth and reproduction. Re-establishment of longleaf will be good news, since these pine stands form distinct habitats important to endangered fox squirrels and many other forest creatures, including the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

A Leafy Craft

Children and grown-ups alike can learn how to identify trees by their leaves in this simple fall activity. First, stop at the library and pick up a field guide to trees or other tree books that have good leaf pictures; an excellent source is the Fandex Family Field Guides series that have a visual key to North American trees (Workman Publishing, New York). Then on your next walk through the neighborhood or local park, collect an assortment of clean tree leaves with different shapes and practice identification. Dogwoods and redbuds have entire leaves, while maples and oaks are lobed. Some trees have *compound* leaves, which means they are made up of many small leaflets.

bandannas. To get the best effect, paint on the bottom side of the leaf where the veins are more raised. Lay the painted leaf on the fabric or paper and apply pressure with your fingertips to all parts of the leaf; then remove. Once the paint is dry, you can waterproof the design on the fabric by putting it in a dryer for 10-15 minutes, or by ironing it on the wrong side.

Learning More...

The Virginia Department of Forestry has recently revised the *Forest Trees of Virginia* booklet, which contains an introduction on how to identify trees as well as individual species descriptions and leaf drawings. A single copy is \$5.00 and quantities of 100 are \$1.00 each. Another resource available from DOF (while quantities last) is the *Discovering the Urban Forest Activity Book*, a collection of puzzles and challenge sheets for grades four through seven. To request either resource, contact David Coffman, Virginia Department of Forestry, Charlottesville, VA (804) 977-6555.

The Cornell Cooperative Extension Service publishes a 44-page, 4-H leader's guide called *Trees: Dead or Alive*, which contains seven activities on how trees grow and their importance as habitat and forest products. The 1992 publication is written for youth group leaders, teachers, and parents who have little or no background in the study of trees, and the activities are geared for students nine years old and up. Available for \$6.25 from the Cornell on-line catalog at www.cce.cornell.edu/publications, or call (607) 255-2080.

Visit these web sites for more forest-related information:

Virginia Department of Forestry: www.dof.state.va.us

Dendrology web site at Virginia Tech: www.fw.vt.edu/dendro/dendrology/dendro.htm National Arbor Day Foundation:

www.arborday.org

National Project Learning Tree: www.plt.org

Sally Mills is an ontdoor writer and editor for Virginia Sea Grant at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. Carol Heiser is a Habitat Education Coordinator at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.





Looking to do some fishing, walking, or birding in a scenic, quiet place? Check what's happening at Little Creek Reservoir Park in Toano.

ust an hour's drive from Richmond and Newport News lies an untapped resource for Virginia's outdoor aficionados. Its name is Little Creek Reservoir Park, nestled in quiet Toano, just beyond the outskirts of Williamsburg. Little Creek Reservoir is quickly becom-

VA STEE PP

ing an angler's dream. It's also prime for bird-watching, nature walks, canoeing, kayaking, or wildlife photography—it's Virginia's "everything outdoors" spot. Its stunning shorelines and crystal clear waters beckon the outdoorsperson to visit.

Most visitors and vacationers to this region come for several reasons: bargain hunting at the Pottery Factory, shopping at the outlets, visiting historic Colonial Williamsburg and Busch Gardens, or strolling across the beautiful campus of the College of William and Mary. It's a safe bet to assume the majority of these people are unaware of Little Creek Reservoir Park. That might soon change.

Although the eastern part of the state has other good fisheries, the 947-acre Little Creek Reservoir has a burgeoning striped bass fishery, an excellent largemouth bass population, and trophy yellow perch, crappie, and chain pickerel. In fact, the lake record largemouth bass is 11 pounds 2 ounces, and the record for chain pickerel is a whopping 6 pounds 3 ounces!

At Little Creek Reservoir anglers will find a wide variety of game fish, like largemouth bass, chain pickerel, and striped hass



Little Creek rvoir Park

Narc N. McGlade



Left: James Stone, Little Creek Reservoir Park staff member, admires a spunky largemouth bass. The lake record for largemouth is currently 1 1 pounds 2 ounces. Below: Little Creek Reservoir's scenic shorelines and crystal clear waters beckon the outdoorsperson to visit this pristine area. All of this has happened in a short time. Little Creek Reservoir didn't open to the public for fishing until 1988. It's regulated by pumping water from the Chickahominy River for subsequent distribution to the Newport News water supply system.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) has studied and sampled Little Creek Reservoir and the results are favorable. Fisheries biologist Mukhtar Farooqi indicated, "A preliminary look at the data suggests the largemouth bass population is in good shape. Regarding bass 8 inches or more in length, 8 percent exceeded 20 inches. These large fish are





well represented, and their growth rates are above average." Farooqi's studies detected 21 fish species in Little Creek Reservoir, although to no one's surprise, the largemouth bass is the favorite target among visitors. Good fisheries' management and catch-and-release efforts play an integral part in Little Creek's success.

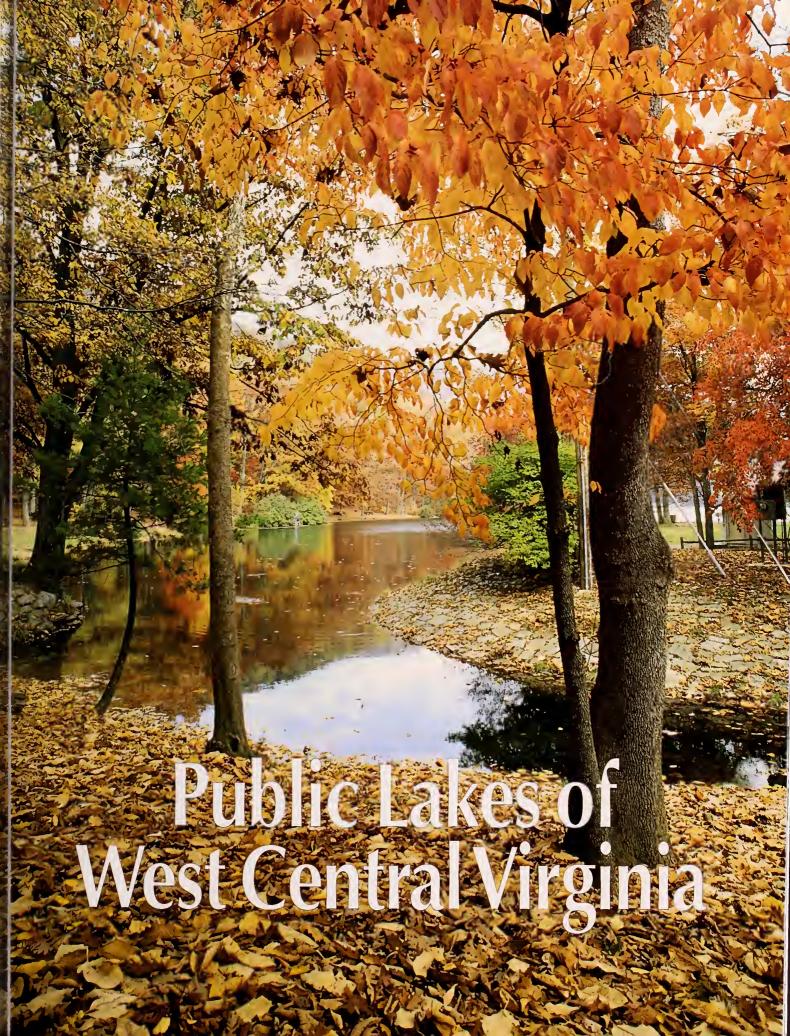
James Stone, senior customer assistant for James City County Parks and Recreation, not only works at the reservoir but fishes it every chance he gets. According to Stone, the best time to fish Little Creek Reservoir is March through June for largemouth bass and April through October for stripers, although no one would argue that this clearwater gem is a year-round fishery.

Farooqi said, "Striped bass are showing signs of doing very well in this lake. Growth rates for fish over one year old are phenomenal." Their growth rates have surprised even the park staff. They have weighed numerous linesides that stretched the scales in the 10- to 18-pound range, with a 37-inch, 18 pound 1 ounce brute reigning as the current lake record. It's very likely that the abundant food supply, consisting of blueback herring and gizzard shad, is the foremost reason for the stellar growth rates. "The average weight of a harvested striper was 4 pounds 9 ounces which is good at this stage of the fishery development."

Black crappies in Little Creek average about two-thirds of a pound according to Farooqi. VDGIF sampling in the spring and fall of 1999 confirmed that there is a good population of crappie in the reservoir. "The majority of the black crappies caught were greater than 8 inches long and a fair proportion of these

Continued on page 21.

Left: Visitors to Little Creek Reservoir Park can view many different bird species, like the great blue heron.





©Dwight Dyke

est Central Virginia has a uniqueness all its own. The beauty of the Alleghany Mountains and the quality of public lakes and reservoirs make this an exciting location to visit for fishing and enjoying wildlife. There are many Forest Service lakes and they are well stocked with trout. Douthat State Park offers swimming and camping, and Douthat Lake is well stocked, seasonally, with catchable trout. Moomaw Reservoir, at 2,530 acres, is the largest body of water in central Virginia. It has large populations of largemouth bass, bream, channel catfish, chain pickerel, yellow perch, and black crappie, as well as the scrappy smallmouth. This large reservoir also has rainbow and brown trout that lurk in the deep, cold depths. Mature rainbow trout seasonally swim up the Jackson

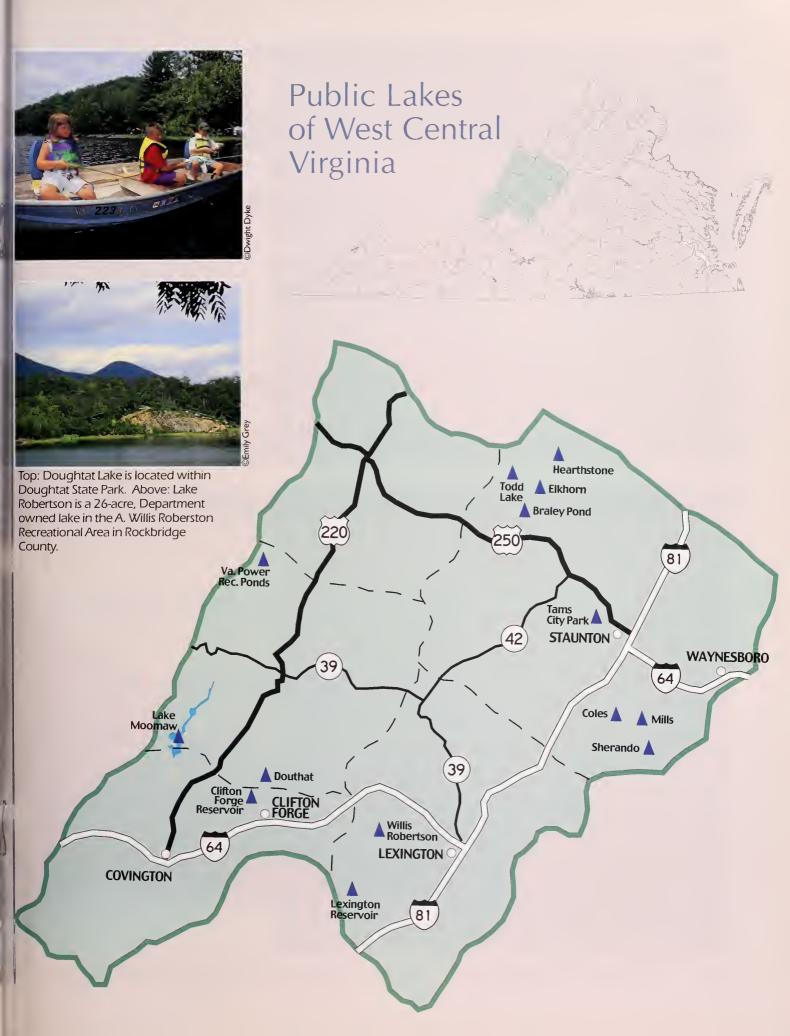
The beauty of the Allegheny Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley are all in one package.

River where it joins the reservoir, providing trophy fish and fantastic opportunities for waiting anglers.

Plan on visiting this part of Virginia in the near future and get a taste of the diversity and splendor that Virginia has to offer.

Previous page: The Sherando Lakes are located in Augusta County. ©Dwight Dyke. Above and right: Lake Moomaw is known for its brown trout and smallmouth bass fishing. Much of the lake's shoreline is adjacent to the 13,428-acre Gathright Wildlife Management Area.





West Central Virginia

Lake, Size & Location	Permit Req.	Boat Ramp	Picnic Facil.	Gas Motor	Boat Rental	Handi Facil.	Conces. Facil.	LMB BG	CF	CRP	TR	СР	NP	WE
Clifton Forge Res. (9 ac) I-64W of Clifton Forge, Exit 24, go toward town, Rt. 606N to top of mountain.	NF							•	•		•			
Coles Run Res. (7 ac) Exit 96 off I-64 at Waynesboro, Rt. 6245, Rt. 664S to Forest Rd 42, take right, go 4.5 miles.	NF										•			
Douthat (52 ac) I-64VV of Lexington (exit 27).	Fee	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Forest Service Lakes														
Braley Pond (5 ac) 10 mi.W of Churchville on Rt. 250, 05 mi.N on Rt. 715.	NF	:	•					•	•		•			
Elkhorn (50 ac) 10 mi.W of Churchville on Rt. 250, 6.5 mi. N on Rt. 715, E on Forest Road 95.	NF	•	•			•		•	•		•			
Hearthstone (14 ac) 5 mi.N of Churchville on Rt. 42, 0.4 mi.N on Rt. 760, 3 mi.W on Rt. 730, 2 mi.N Forest Service Road 101.	NF	•						•	•	•	•			
Sherando (20 & 8 ac) Exit 96 off I-64 at Waynesboro Rt. 624 5 (3 mi.) and Rt. 664 5 (7 mi.).	NF	•	sw		Canoe		•	•	•		•			
Todd Lake (5 ac) - continue on Forest Rt. 95,.3 miles past Elkhorn.	NF							•	•				•	•
Lexington (22 ac) Rt. 11 south to 251-612-667.	•										•			
Mills Creek Res. (17 ac) Exit 96 off I-64 at Waynesboro, Rt. 6245, Rt. 664S to Forest Rd 42, take right, go 1.5 miles.	NF										•			
Moomaw (2,530 ac) Callaghan Exit 16 off 1-64, 2 mi. east on 661, 10 mi. north on Rt. 620.	PK	•	•	•	•	•	•	SMB	•	•	•	٠		
Tamms City Park (3 ac) City of Staunton.								•	•					
Virginia Power Rec. Ponds (40 & 32 ac) Rt 39 west of Warm 5prings to Hiners 5tore Rt. 600 N (6 mi).		•	•			•		•	•	•				
Willis Robertson (26 ac) Rt. 11 bypass to 5. Lexington, Rt. 251 follow signs to lake.		•	•		•	•	•	•	•					•

Key

Fee -Permit available at location NF - National Forest

SW - Swimming

LMB/BG - Largemouth Bass/Bluegill

CF - Catfish CRP - Crappie

CP - Chain Pickerel NP-Northern Pike

PK - Parking SMB - Smallmouth Bass

WE -Walleye

TR-Trout





For more information contact: **VDGIF** P.O.Box 996 Verona, VA 24482 540/248-9360 www.dgif.state.va.us



The changing colors of the leaves in fall make it a great time to visit many of the public lakes of West Central Virginia.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

were over 12 inches." Each year some lucky angler brings in a slab pushing the 3-pound mark. Small live minnows, little tube jigs, and curly-tailed grubs are Stone's favorite forms of trickery to fool these beautiful crappies.

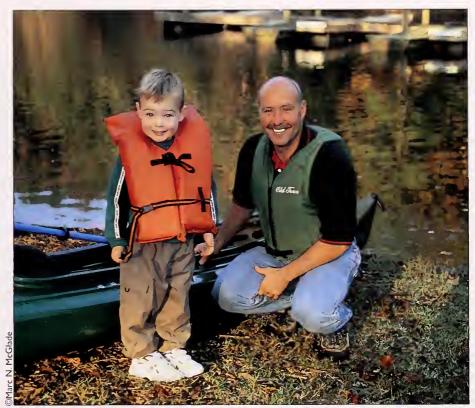
Farooqi also mentioned that the redear sunfish population has improved considerably compared to previous years, and bluegills were the most abundant species recorded during their sampling efforts. Most of the redears—whose moniker is shellcrackers—caught by VDGIF were along drop-offs in about 8 feet of water.

Little Creek Reservoir is outstanding for big yellow perch: it ranked second in the Commonwealth in 1999 for trophy fish certificates. Anglers earn these colorful accolades from VDGIF for catching yellow perch measuring 12 inches or more in length or weighing 1½ pounds or more.

Ditto for the chain pickerel population. Little Creek also anchored the second spot statewide in 1999 for its trophy fish certificates for these toothy critters. An extremely powerful fish, anglers typically hoodwink chain pickerel with artificial lures intended for bass or with live minnows.

Bruce Ackert, Little Creek Park Supervisor, indicated that a host of exciting new things are taking place at the park. "We have cleared a milelong walking trail and plan to add a gazebo, two paved parking lots, an entrance road, a children's playground, a picnic shelter, restroom facilities, and a walking bridge connecting the two peninsulas. We intend to put in a double-wide boat ramp too." These improvements are being jointly funded by state grants and local funds, and are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2001.

Little Creek Reservoir's large pier enables shore-bound anglers to try their luck for multiple species of fish.



John Carnifax, superintendent of parks, along with his son Blake ready themselves to shove off in one of the Park's kayaks.





Toano's climate allows locals and visitors to enjoy year-round fishing and a host of other outdoor activities. The park rents canoes, kayaks, johnboats, paddle boats, trolling motors,

Left: Visitors to Little Creek Reservoir Park are often treated to the awesome sight of a bald eagle soaring high above in search of his next meal. Below: Since it opened to the public in 1988, the park staff has worked hard to create a great place to bring kids and families to enjoy the outdoors. With good populations of crappie and bass, Little Creek Reservoir is also an excellent place to introduce a youngster to fishing.

and batteries. The park also has a 92-foot, handicap accessible fishing pier. If you have the luxury of owning a boat, there's a single lane launch ramp for your use, that is, until the new double-wide launch ramp is completed.

There are so many good reasons to plan a trip here. And, according to Ackert, "This place isn't just about fishing, it's about the great people." After having visited the park myself, I can only agree.

Marc McGlade is a free-lance writer and photographer for national and regional magazines, newspapers, and Web sites. He's also a fishing instructor and lecturer. Marc resides in Midlothian, Va.

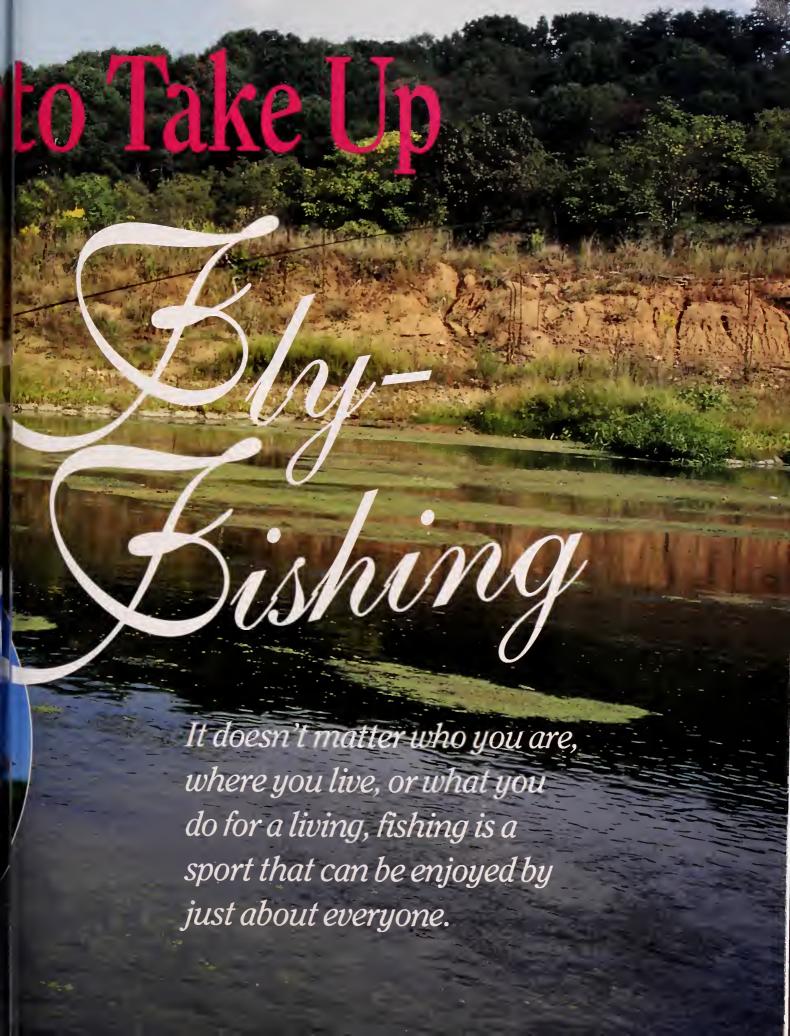
For Additional Information on Little Creek Reservoir Park

- To contact Little Creek Reservoir Park, call (757) 566-1702
- To reach the park and boat ramp, take U.S. 60 to Toano, then take Route 610 (Old Forge Road) to Lakeview Drive. Turn left on Lakeview Drive, then turn right into the second park entrance.
- The park rents canoes, kayaks, johnboats, paddleboats, trolling motors, batteries, and sells contour maps.
- Little Creek Reservoir has a 92foot, handicap accessible pier for visitors who wish to fish from there.











by Elizabeth Grant photos by King Montgomery

he jokes abound: beleaguered husband escapes nagging wife for a day of peace and tranquility fishing. Regardless of gender or the state of our personal relationships, we have all enjoyed time away from the ones we love to pursue a consuming interest of our own. But despite the stereotype, I encounter many who wish their spouse or significant other shared their love of fly-fishing. They ask me if I fished before I met King Montgomery (I didn't), and how he got me started. In turn, I ask them about their wives or partners, and the stories I have heard prompted me to write this article. I have not spoken with any man who said he was glad his wife or partner didn't fish; in fact, I've detected wistfulness in remarks that showed he would love to share his interest with her.

Of course, there is no set formula for getting someone interested in fly-fishing, but I have noticed certain recurring themes, drawn from my own experiences and those of others. My observations are written from the perspective one usually encounters—of a man trying to interest a woman in angling—but most comments would probably apply to the reverse situation as well.

Don't Start With Fly-Fishing

First off, strange as it may sound, don't start with fly-fishing, unless your wife already fishes with another type of tackle or insists on starting

Fishing legend Lefty Kreh gives the author some fly-fishing pointers. Outside instruction is often better than trying to teach your spouse or friend yourself.

this way. Let's face it—fly-fishing is difficult. Since your first objective is to get your partner fishing period, regardless of tackle type, start with the easiest—a spinning rod. She should be casting with acceptable skill, distance, and accuracy in 30 minutes. This is an important point—we all prefer what we excel at, and it is tough to excel at fly-fishing when you first begin. Your girlfriend may be an exception and may take to fly-fishing right away, despite the initial frustrations and steep learning curve. But if you're a guy who plays the odds, I'd advise against it, because chances are it will turn her off.

Creature Comforts

Your early fishing excursions should be pleasant and comfortable, to build positive associations. Good weather is the first requirement. I don't mean to say women can't "take" rough conditions; the question is whether or not they'll want to. I have been fishing in the snow, as a hurricane approached, in cold pouring down rain, and in a winter stream with a hole in my borrowed waders. And, frankly, I didn't really enjoy most of those occasions. If King had taken me out in those conditions on our first trips, they might have been our last.

Calls of Nature

You must pay attention to bathroom access; this issue is always in the front of a woman's mind. (You'd be preoccupied with it too if you had to lower your pants every time you needed to pee). And by "bathroom access," I just mean a time and place for a pit stop. If you are alone in the woods with ample foliage for a screen, there shouldn't be a prob-

With a little patience and practice, the author has learned that the sport of fly-fishing can be extremely rewarding.





The author holds a redear, a member of the sunfish family, caught on a fly rod and artifical popping bug.

lem, but if you are confined to a small boat or are fishing exposed waters or terrain, you need to arrange for bathroom breaks, and tell her in advance what those will be. Some women just won't drink any fluids at all to try to avoid this problem. However, denying yourself fluids is unhealthy, and "holding it in" when you need to go is uncomfortable. You won't win any converts if this is your only solution.

Who's in Charge?

Once you've convinced her to go fishing with you, whatever she says goes. If she's too hot, go in. If she's too cold, go in. If she's had enough, go in. Why? First, if she is forced to stay out when she is uncomfortable, you might be fishing alone next time. Second, you need to equalize the balance of power. You surpass her in experience and knowledge, which inadvertently puts her in an inferior position—not a very pleasant place to be in. So let her call the shots. You may have to stop fishing sooner than you'd like, but if you want her to go out again, you will. "Fishing," for beginners, means "catching." Be sure to take your partner to some place where you are likely to catch fish; most beginners will not be enticed further by a fishless day. On my first angling outing, which consisted of three hours in a bass boat, I hooked three bass and landed two. I was very pleased and was interested in trying again. In contrast, I have had a 6-hour day on the Potomac River where I caught no fish. Even now, after ten years of fishing with King, I am not so much of an enthusiast as to enjoy a day like that.

The Transition to Fly-Fishing

I began to fly-fish after fishing with a spinning rod for about five years. Don't groan—I don't mean to imply you have to wait that long before handing your wife or partner a fly rod. But there is no real reason to rush, and there are some benefits to a delayed transition, such as flexibility with simultaneous fishing when two fly anglers would have to alter-



A stripping guard or a Band-Aid helps to protect against line cuts and burns on your fingers.

nate. Two tips for making the transition: don't teach her yourself, and don't push her. I broke the first rule—King actually did teach me but I don't advise it. Unlike casting with a spinning rod, your girlfriend or partner is not likely to pick it up quickly. She will be frustrated, your attempts to help will sound like criticism, and the cycle spirals downward. Plus, shocking as it may seem, though you may be a great caster or angler, you might not be a very good teacher. Of course, everyone thinks that applies to someone else, but I recommend saving your expertise for after someone else has taught her the basics. I can also attest to the second point—not to push her. King did not push me and let me shift focus at my own pace. It was a slow pace. I didn't get much practice flyfishing because when we did go out, which wasn't often, I wanted to use a spinning rod, the equipment I was most comfortable with and got the best results from. Only gradually did I start transitioning to a fly rod. That is okay. Remember, slow and steady wins the race. Let her set the pace.

High Percentage Fly-Fishing

Once she starts fly-fishing, I suggest you begin with bluegill. They are plentiful, easy to catch, and fun to land. If you lose one, you can always get another. If you are a trout enthusiast, forget it, at least for now. Trout are not exactly "trainer fish," and they live in moving water, which requires more angling skill than lake or pond fishing, both to manage the water itself and to work around overhanging trees. To get

One of the many benefits of fly-fishing is that it can be done just about anywhere there is water. While on vacation in Central America, the author tests her skills on the shallow flats for bonefish, near the Boca Paila Fishing Lodge on the Yucatan peninsula.

your wife or partner comfortable with fly-fishing, you've got to produce results. Don't test her dedication on advanced waters or finicky fish.

Conclusion: Fishing is a very personal thing, of course. Your wife simply might not like it no matter what you do. One man I met said his wife just didn't like the feel of something live struggling on the end of her line. Or, you might be one of the ones whose spouse gets so interested she ultimately equals or exceeds you in skill and obsession. Most likely, your situation will fall somewhere in between. With any luck, that should be enough. But regardless of skill level, there is a real sense of personal accomplishment in achieving something difficult. Last year I came back from a week bone

fishing at the Boca Paila Fishing Lodge on the Yucatan Peninsula. I had cringed when I realized the expertise of my colleagues and heard about the need for long distance and precision casting. But I did well, caught fish, and had fun. Returning, I felt I had played in the "major leagues" of fly angling, and if I didn't win any MVP awards, at least no one laughed me off the field. That's a long way to come from nine years ago when I first picked up a spinning rod. What's that they say about the journey being half the fun?

Elizabeth Grant is a lawyer for the Defense Department, an avid amateur ice skater, and a part-time fly-angler. This article was published in a shorter version in Fly Fish America magazine, January 2001.





VDGIF 2001 Calendar of Events

September 14–16: *Virginia Outdoors Family Weekend,* Hungry Mother State Park, Smyth, Va. For information call (804) 367-6351.

September 29: *Women in the Outdoors,* Izaak Walton League Park, Centreville, Va. For information call Linda Layser (703) 425-6665 or email rglayser@msn.com.

October 5–7: Virginia Outdoors Woman, Mother-Daughter Event, Appomattox, Va. For information call (804) 367-6351.

October 5–7: Eastern Shore Birding Festival. For information call (757) 787-2460 or check www.intercom. net/npo/esvabirding.

Additional information on VDGIF events can be found on the Department Web site at www.dgif. state.va.us.

Robin Rarity by Marika Byrd

Mr. Paul A. Hagy of Marion, Virginia, a long-time subscriber, submitted the photo of an albino robin, "that has taken up residence in a cedar tree behind Cedars Baptist Church in Marion. I see her almost daily and I'm waiting to see what her offspring will look like.

This is the first albino robin I've ever seen or heard of. I know it can occur in any animal, but this is my first."

Ray Fernald, manager of the Nongame and Environmental Services at the Virginia Department of



Albino robin, photographed by Mr. Paul A. Hagy, Marion, Virginia.

Game and Inland Fisheries, says this happens in nature, but he has never seen an albino robin.

Speaking of a robin, read on.

A Shelter from the Storm

Mr. Dennis Nelson of Middlebrook, Virginia, another long-time



A robin seeks shelter from the rain. Photographed by Mr. Dennis Nelson, Middlebrook, Virginia.

subscriber and reader of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine writes that he has been an avid "fisherman, hunter, outdoorsman, and photographer for over 50 years."

Recently he sent us a photograph taken in his back yard. The baby robin sought shelter from the stormy morning rain. The cross rail on the bench made a perfect spot for the young robin to find "a shelter in the time of storm," as the verse goes.

Keep a camera conveniently handy to catch that unusual scene or angle when you are in the outdoors—a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to capture that moment in time—just like Dennis Nelson.

Remember our *Virginia Wildlife* 2001 annual photography contest, and your entry just might be the one that captures an award. The categories this year are: *Birds of a Feather, Cold and Clammy Critters*, and *Fantastic Flowers*. For contest guidelines send a SASE to Photo Tips Contest, Virginia Wildlife, P. O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104, or visit our Web site at www.dgif.state.va. us. The contest deadline is October 26, 2001, at 5:00 p.m.

Write On Target

State Parks Offer Hunting Opportunities

by Lee Watts

Continuing last month's article about managed hunts and public hunting access, this month we will focus on Virginia's State Parks.

These parks are places of resounding natural beauty, where you can see wildlife in their natural habitat. But left unchecked, over population can quickly destroy the delicate balance between habitat and wildlife within a park.

In an effort to manage the size and health of their deer herds, several parks offer controlled access hunting or special lottery hunts. Lottery hunts require the entire park to be closed to the general public during the specified dates. Other parks, which allow hunting throughout the hunting season, close designated areas only.

State parks offering special lottery deer hunts include: Caledon Natural Area, Chippokes Plantation, False Cape, Mason Neck, Smith Mountain Lake, and York River. Interested in wild boar? Try False Cape. It has both deer and wild boar.

Even if you do not get selected for one of these hunts, there is a standby lottery to fill vacancies left open by absentees. Verify your check-in time and don't be late. (I was 5 minutes late and lost my space last year at York River.)

Parks offering hunting only in designated areas are: Fairy Stone, Grayson Highlands, Hungry Mother, James River, Occoneechee, Pocahontas, and Sailor's Creek Battlefield.

Other state parks are located near prime hunting locations and are open for camping or cabin accommodations for outdoorsmen and their families. There are also special workshops and a Women-Only Deer hunt at York River.

To learn more about these parks and to apply for any of the special lottery hunts, go to the following Web site: http://www.dcr.state.va.us/parks/hunting.htm

You can apply on-line for the managed hunts or make reservations to camp or stay in a cabin at this address. There is a registration fee for the lottery hunts and each park may require a nominal fee to access the park. You can also place reservations by calling 1-800-933-PARK (or 225-3867 within the Richmond area).

Have a question? Need a regulation clarified? Need to know more about what the Department does? Send your question or inquire to:

WriteOnTarget P. O. Box 11104 Richmond, VA. 23230-1104

You can reach us by calling (804) 367-9369 or via e-mail at WriteOn-Target@dgif.state.va.us. Your question could appear in a future issue of *Virginia Wildlife.* □

Is That Rock Moving?

Mrs. Juanita Heglar, (Virginia's biggest turtle lover) lives in Salisbury, North Carolina. A long time subscriber to *Virginia Wildlife* magazine she writes to share a delightful experienced she had while visiting her summer home in Galax, Virginia.

"When arriving at our summer home during the 2000 Memorial Day weekend my husband re-





Using her camera Mrs. Juanita Heglar captured this rarely seen sight of a common snapping turtle laying her eggs and then later the young as they hatched and headed for water.

sponded, 'there is a huge rock in the middle of the lawn!' To my dismay the huge rock was actually a large snapping turtle laying eggs. I ran into the house to get my camera to capture this amazing act of nature appearing before my eyes. My grandchildren, Mackenzie 10 and Nicholas 11 named her, *Myrtle the Turtle*. She laid 39 eggs.

The eggs were scheduled to hatch on Labor Day weekend, according to our research. We eagerly returned on that weekend to see if the eggs had hatched. When we arrived we found the baby turtles slowly digging their way to the surface. What a wonderful occasion, but also a great learning experience for my two grandchildren. We also had the chance to help the baby turtles to the edge of the river on our property to see them off on their first swim. Thank goodness for cameras! Now we have beautiful pictures to remember our experience with Myrtle the Turtle and to share with all the readers of Virginia Wildlife magazine."

Virginia Wildife Magazine Cover Cost to Increase

Due to an increase in postal rates for periodicals, the cover price for a single copy of *Virginia Wildlife* magazine will increase to \$2.00 beginning October 2001. This increase will not affect the individual cost for a subscription, which is still at the low price of \$10.00 for 12 issues or \$24.00 for 36 issues.

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The Water

by Jim Crosby, Region 4 Boater Education Coordinator

The Power of Lightning

I ightning is one of the more powerful forces of nature that a boater can confront. It is also the one powerful force of nature that is least understood by almost everyone. It is said that the best protection from lightning is to avoid it whenever possible. Unfortunately, boaters cannot always avoid lightning. If you boat enough, sooner or later you are going to have to ride out a thunderstorm on the water.

Knowing the probabilities of such an event, the wise skipper will seek advance knowledge and make preparations to cope with such an eventuality. Understanding lightning is the first step to reducing your vulnerability.

A bolt of lightning carries up to 30 million volts of electricity at 100,000 amperes. That sudden, vast amount of energy released into the air will heat it up to 30,000 degrees Kelvin—white hot heat that will char a large oak tree in a 50-microsecond exposure.

Warm, moisture-laden air rises and evaporates, forming fluffy, white cumulus clouds. As more moisture accumulates, the clouds darken and change into cumulonimbus clouds—thunderstorm clouds. Frequently, they have a flattened top or anvil shape, reaching to 40,000 feet or more.

The interaction (friction) between cold and warm air creates a static electrical charge. The upper portion of the cloud develops a positive charge, and the lower portion develops a negative charge. The air, a poor conductor, restricts the flow of elec-

tricity between these electrical charges, between clouds, and the clouds and ground. This allows the charges to build until they can breach the air insulator and explode into a lightning flash—flashes that can be cloud-to-cloud or cloud-to-ground.

These charges consist of negative and positive ions. Negative ions (charges) repel negative ions and attract positive ions and vice versa. In other words, opposites attract and similar ions repel each other. Therefore, as a thundercloud passes overhead, a concentration of positive ions accumulate on objects below the cloud because they are attracted by the negative ions in the lower portion of the cloud. The positive ions tend to accumulate at the top of the highest ungrounded objects, such as antenna masts, buildings, and even people standing.

Earth ground represents a negative charge of ions. Therefore, if the tallest object around is electrically grounded, it becomes negatively charged and repels the clouds positive charge of ions. If the metal mast of a sailboat is negatively grounded

to the water it lies in, the mast will repel the negative ion charge in the thundercloud overhead. However if it does not have a bonded ground to the water, it will accumulate a charge of positive ions that will attract the positive ions in the base of the cloud.

If that grounded object is tall enough, it can offer a cone of protection to everything under it that falls within a 45-degree angle in all directions from the top down, just like a pyramid. A sailboat mast or a radio antenna can offer this cone of protection as long as they have a bonded ground. Most radio antennas have a bonded ground through the radio to which they are attached; however, you must not disconnect the radio because if you do, you will attract lightning to it

Think about this theory and figure out a way to establish a cone of protection against a lightning strike on your vessel. And lastly, always make certain that you are not the highest object around in a thunderstorm because no one on this planet can offer you a guarantee against a lightning strike!





by Joan Cone

September Brings Squirrels

\(\bar{V}\) hat do squirrels taste like? They resemble turkey dark meat, only better! Most of the meat is in the hindquarters. Parboiling or pressure cooking until tender lets you bone the meat easily. Now you can substitute squirrel in recipes calling for boned chicken or turkey.

Menu

Potato-Yogurt Soup Squirrel With Pasta Fresh Greens With Sautéed Portabellos Pumpkin/Apple Bread

Potato-Yogurt Soup

1 small onion, sliced

3 green onions, sliced

2 tablespoons butter or margarine,

2 medium potatoes, sliced

 $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups water

1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary

2 teaspoons chicken-flavored bouillon granules

½ cup hot water

1 carton (8 ounces) plain yogurt

Cook onions in butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until tender. Add potatoes and 1½ cups water. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Spoon potato mixture and rosemary into a processor container and process until smooth. Return to Dutch oven. Dissolve bouillon granules in ½ cup hot water and add to potato mixture. Cook over low heat until thoroughly heated, stirring occasionally. With a wire whisk, stir in yogurt (at room temperature.) Serve immediately. Makes 3½ cups.

Squirrel With Pasta

1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, cut into 1-inch cubes, softened

³/₄ cup milk

1 package (16 ounces) frozen broccoli, carrots, and cauliflower, defrosted and drained

3 cups cooked rainbow fusilli or rotini

2 cups cubed cooked squirrel

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

½ teaspoon dried dill weed Salt and pepper to taste

Grated Parmesan cheese

In a 3-quart saucepan, combine cream cheese and milk. Cook over medium heat for 4 to 6 minutes or until mixture is smooth, stirring constantly. Add remaining ingredients, except Parmesan cheese. Cook over medium-low heat for 5 to 7 minutes or until mixture is hot, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle each serving evenly with Parmesan cheese. Serves 4 to

Fresh Greens with Sautéed Portabellos

3 to 4 cups leaf lettuce or mesculum mix

2 to 3 large Portabello mushrooms, washed and sliced into 1/4-inch

1 tablespoon butter

1/4 to 1/2 cup Italian or Caesar dressing

1 to 2 tablespoons Balsamic vinegar

In a skillet, sauté mushrooms in melted butter until browned and just tender. Do not overcook. As soon as mushrooms are browned on both sides, place in a flat dish with a mixture of dressing and Balsamic vinegar. Allow to stand for 15 to 30 minutes. Serve on top of greens and drizzle with dressing. Serves 4.

Pumpkin/Apple Bread

(This excellent recipes comes from Edith Johnson of Williamsburg.)

4 eggs, beaten lightly

 $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups sugar

½ cup vegetable oil

1 can (16 ounces) pumpkin

2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, and chopped

3 cups flour

½ teaspoon salt

2 teaspoons baking soda

 $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cinnamon

1 teaspoon nutmeg

1 teaspoon ground cloves

1/4 teaspoon ground allspice

Topping:

1 tablespoon flour

5 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 tablespoon butter, softened

Grease 2 loaf pans, each $9 \times 5 \times 3$ inches. Preheat oven to 350° F. Mix topping together and set aside. In a large bowl whisk together the eggs, sugar, oil, and pumpkin. Sift dry ingredients into pumpkin mixture and stir until well mixed. Fold in chopped apples. Divide mixture between pans and sprinkle topping evenly over both. Bake 50 minutes or until breads test done. Let cool 45 minutes before removing from pans. \square



ne of the easiest ways to attract wildlife is to build a brush pile. This assemblage of logs, twigs, and branches can provide shelter, nesting areas, and "homes" for numerous organisms.

During the summer, groundnesting mammals and birds (such as rabbits and rufous-sided towhees) might build nests at the bottom of the pile. After the logs have begun to rot, salamanders will hide in them during the day, waiting for the cover of darkness to start hunting for food. If the logs are rotted enough, Eastern five-lined skinks and other lizards may lay their eggs here.

In winter, the brush pile will be used for shelter from harsh weather and for protection from predators. Fox sparrows, white-throated sparrows, and dark-eyed juncos—all visitors from the North—will forage nearby so that they will have a place

to hide if a sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawk comes hunting. At night, these same birds may sleep among the interlocking branches. Amphibians (such as gray treefrogs), reptiles, and many kinds of insects will spend the cold months in a dormant state inside the rotting logs.

Another important function of a brush pile that is often overlooked is the return of vital nutrients to the soil as it decays. You can think of it as a compost pile and transfer the rich soil found at its base within a few years to other parts of your yard.

Poke carefully at the decaying tissue and you may find millipedes and pillbugs, all of which dine on dead plant material, breaking down the brush pile. Bacteria and fungi are also present, drawing life from the lifeless wood and decomposing it in the process. Lichens (complex plants composed of an alga and a fungus in

a symbiotic relationship) grow upon the wood surfaces, releasing a weak acid that breaks down plant tissue. Spiders and centipedes prey upon the scavengers (those organisms feeding on the wood), while skunks, birds, and other predators tear apart the logs in order to make a meal of the variety of creatures living there.

Make a brush pile today. You'll be glad you did!





A brush pile provides a spot for many animals, such as this red admiral butterfly. Photos © Marlene A.Condon.



Winter brush piles in your yard can be lifesaving places for songbirds trying to escape from hungry hawks and harsh weather.



Top photo: Brush piles can be camouflaged by building them in the woods where they blend into the scenery. Above: Cottontail rabbits are especially fond of brush piles as protection from predators and for safely raising their young.



story and illustration by Spike Knuth

Blue Jay Cyanocitta cristata

The blue jay is one of the most common and recognizable of bird visitors to our backyard feeders. Measuring 11½ inches long, it has violet-blue and bright blue upper parts, gray under parts, a black neck band, and rounded facial stripe, plus a crest, which are all distinctive identifying marks.

during nesting, when blue jays come into the neighborhood, because they occasionally eat the eggs and young of other birds. They feed mainly on insects, caterpillars, seeds, wild fruits, and nuts, especially small acorns. Blue jays often bury acorns in the forest

stumps—thereby effectively planting them to sprout the following spring.

The range call of the blue invites

The raucous call of the blue jay is a common sound as they announce to the woodlands that there's an intruder invading their domain; however, they can be very secretive too, moving quietly through the treetops just watching and following. While it favors the pine and oak woods of Virginia, it is one bird that has been able to adapt to living close to man, and it is common in our towns and cities.

Blue jays nest in May and June, usually fairly high up in larger trees. They build loose, ragged nests of sticks, stems, grasses, paper, string, or strips of rags. Come fall, young and adults flock up in noisy, family groups, adding their flashy blue colors to the already brightly-colored fall landscape.

Some blue jays may meander southward in winter, but they do so erratically and many remain in cold climates. A common sight at our backyard feeders all winter, they will take sunflower seeds, hammering the shells open while grasping them with their feet. Sometimes they'll gulp three or four seeds—fly off—regurgitate them, then work on breaking them open. They are also very dominant at the feeder with other birds giving them all the space they want. Despite its bully-like attitude, it's an interesting and colorful visitor that's fun to watch.



The New 2001-2002 Virginia Wildlife Calendar Is Now Available!

If you enjoy the outdoors and viewing Virginia's abundant wildlife, then you do not want to miss a single month of the *Virginia Wildlife* Calendar. This full-color, nationally award-winning calendar offers a little something for everyone. Each month you will find information about the moon phases, sunrise-sunset, the best days to go fishing, and fun facts about the outdoors.







The Virginia Wildlife Calendar is produced by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and customers are reminded that the 2001-2002 Wildlife Calendar starts in September and runs through August. Quantities are limited so order NOW.







A tonly \$6.50 each, the *Virginia Wildlife* Calendar is perfect for your home, office, or as a gift to family or friends. Make check payable to: Treasurer of Virginia and send to Virginia Wildlife Calendar, VDGIF, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. For additional ordering information or questions please call (804) 367-2752. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.





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